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ABSTRACT

This paper is based on the assumption that each school creates its own culture and that comparisons between a tribal society and a school society might prove profitable as a heuristic device to learn how change might be more effectively approached by change agents. Studies of the impact of western technology on tribal societies have suggested that material objects are more easily borrowed and integrated into an existing culture than ideas since objects need little explanation of their utility. Additive integration is the process of adding a new culture trait to the existing culture, since the new element is merely added to the culture inventory without changing it. Some of the variables to be considered when introducing directed change into a system are: the nature of the agent of change, the expectation for change within the school, the margin of security shared by members of the system, and the time factor. If change is occurring on a large-scale basis throughout social studies education such as occurred in the sciences (Kuhn, 1970), social studies educators would do well to study the model used by Rex Hutchens in his study of the education of Cuban women. Hutchens' model for studying culture change is based on the Kuhn-Wallace culture change model. Hutchens studied how the mass media focused the public's attention on innovation and how political units refined and reinforced the innovation as the program was made operational. (SM)

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THE SOCIAL STUDIES AND INSTITUTIONAL CHANGE

by

John H. Chilcott

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THE SOCIAL STUDIES AND INSTITUTIONAL CHANGE

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This paper was precipitated by a remark made by Fred Newman at last year's conference. It was something to the effect, "I don't understand why they don't accept these changes in the social studies curriculum." It occurred to me at the time that this was an opportunity for an anthropologist to make a contribution to the Consortium since cultural change is a significant research interest in my discipline and curricular change is a form of cultural change.

Of course much of the anthropological research on culture change has focused on tribal societies and remote villages. Yet, if one can accept the assumption as do some of us in the field of anthropology and education (Chilcott 1968, Khleif) that the school creates its own culture and can be perceived as a small society, some comparisons between a tribal society and a school society might prove profitable as a heuristic device. I should call your attention, however, to the fact that other anthropologists suggest that the school culture is nothing more than a refraction of the national culture through the bureaucratic lens of the institution. For purposes of this paper please accept the assumption that each school creates its own culture.

As anthropologists including archaeologists and historicans, began collecting data on the changes which took place when tribal peoples came in contact with western industrial societies, they noted that one of the first features

of western society borrowed by tribal people were metal tools; the gun replaced the bow and arrow, iron pots replaced clay pots, and steel axes and knives readily replaced stone axes and knives. The introduction of metal for stone resulted in concommitant changes in other components of the society. Guns upset the balance of political power with surrounding tribes, or caused some groups to overkill the available game. Also in some instances the desire for guns caused the hunters to shift from providing meat for the family to hunting game for their hides which could be traded for metal goods. The acquisition of metal pots required money or trade goods since metal pots could not be manufactured locally. There is a famous case study (Sharpe) on the effect of introducing steel axes among an Australian aboriginal group by a missionary which shifted the whole social dynamics of the group from male to female dominance.

This part-to-whole or holistic framework used by the anthropologist to explain the affect of metal tools on other components of a society, is an extremely useful conceptual framework for understanding change within a culture. The principal, curriculum specialist, or other advocate of change in the school should be aware that any change will also require corresponding changes in all areas of the social system. There have been a few case studies of change in school contexts (Atwood Wolcott 1978) but to my knowledge there have been no studies of change in the social studies curriculum within a school context using a holistic framework. This should prove to be a fertile field for future research.

The studies of the impact of western technology on tribal societies have suggested that material objects are more easily borrowed and integrated into an existing culture than ideas since objects need little explanation of their utility. On the other hand, new ideas require a much longer time to be accepted since they require considerable face to face explanation. A steel knife, for example, can be exchanged between people and easily replace a stone knife of less durability and

efficiency. The steel knife may compete with stone knives for a short period of time until it gradually replaces the stone knife as a tool in that society. Furthermore, the steel knife requires little change in the methodology of knife use. There was, then, what the anthropologist refers to as good "cultural fit" between the new cultural element, steel knives, and the old cultural element, stone knives. The new element was easily integrated into the existing system. This notion of cultural fit is another useful concept from anthropology which can be employed by change agents in education.

My favorite example of poor cultural fit and lack of integration of a new cultural trait is that of the Catholic missionaries among the Navajo Indians in the Southwest. The Navajo have a great fear of ghosts, of the dead, of anything that has contact with a dead person. Can you imagine the reaction of the Navajo to a Catholic funeral, and the missionary's sermon on the Holy Ghost and the Virgin Mary, of life after death where the soul leaves the body, and of a wake with the viewing and sometimes fondling of the dead body in the coffin? No wonder then, that the Navajo were slow to assume the trappings of Catholicism.

One could cite many examples of poor cultural fit between the culture of the school and the cultures represented by the clients of the school. These range from attempting to conduct school on the opening day of the deer hunting season in a rural hunting community, to the horror experienced by some Southwest Native American students in a biology class when they are expected to dissect a frog, one of the most powerful animals in their religion. The social studies change agent should be aware that in some instances there may be little chance of success due to a lack of cultural fit between what is being proposed and the existing school culture.

The process of adding a new culture trait such as a steel knife to the existing culture is referred to as "additive integration" since the new element is

merely added to the cultural inventory without changing it. I used this approach during those "good old days" when the National Science Foundation was supporting summer institutes for teachers in the social sciences. I realized that the success of adding still another course to the already crowded, and in some instances state mandated, social studies curriculum would be short-lived for a whole host of reasons, including added cost, lack of experienced teachers, space requirements (archaeology lab), and student interest. As a consequence, I used the additive-integration approach to curriculum development in my institute by urging the teachers to incorporate those features of anthropology which would enhance their already existing courses (Chilcott 1977). Human biology enhanced the standard biology course. The emergence of mathematical systems was added to mathematics and the cultural meaning of symbols was incorporated in the art course. The Civil War in the U.S. was discussed as cultural conflict; cultural ecology was added to geography, and language as a cognitive system, was added to the English class. The Southwest history course was taught from the perspective of the impact of the arrival of each new cultural group, from the Hohokam to the eastern business tycoons, upon the cultural group in residence at the time of their arrival. In my estimation this was good cultural fit since anthropology as a general science, including human biology on the one hand, and culture, language, and religion on the other hand, is both scientific and humanistic. Furthermore, what was being proposed was subject matter which was added to a subject area curriculum which did not require any changes in the behavior and structure of the classroom. I was amazed by a follow-up study which revealed the many ways in which these talented and highly creative teachers incorporated anthropological information and concepts into their courses.

Other cultural elements are not as appropriately integrated into the culture as was the steel knife. Some of the Apache Indians, when they encountered

the U.S. army, were attracted to the red suspenders which the soldiers wore. It became fashionable to wear a pair of these suspenders attached to the loin cloth. This is an example of a new cultural trait being integrated into the society with an entirely new meaning being attributed to it.

I am reminded of a missionary on a remote Polynesian island. Missionaries provide favorite anecdotes for anthropologists because they were often the first contact tribal people had with the western world, and because they are prime examples of intentional change agents. This missionary, being of good New England Puritan background, had difficulty facing his bare-breasted congregation on Sunday morning. The missionary's solution to his problem was to order several cartons of T shirts which he distributed to the female members of his congregation one fine Sunday morning. You can imagine his consternation when during his daily stroll along the beach the next morning, he met several of these women on the beach in their T shirts with two holes cut out of the front to permit freedom of movement. Obviously the women did not attribute the same meaning to the purpose of wearing the T shirt as did the good pastor.

Change agents in education need to be aware that the natives, in this case the teachers and/or students, may not understand the purpose of the innovation or, as in the case of the Apache, attribute an entirely new meaning to the object or event than was intended by the change advocate.

There are many examples of what happened when representatives of a colonial power appointed a member of a tribal society who did not have a high status in the tribal society to a position of authority. As a consequence the social structure and political power in the tribal society was disrupted. When introducing change in a school, the advocate for change should pay particular attention to the existing roles and statuses in the school. The change agent should keep in mind that certain individuals have vested interests in the social structure and that

change, particularly in the social dynamics of the school, could be very threatening to them. The change agent needs to maintain a margin of security for teachers while change is taking place in the school.

In his case study of the introduction of a new guidance program in a high school, Atwood used an interaction analysis to attempt to account for the change in the patterns of social action and the emergence of new patterns of events. He discovered that as a result of the new guidance program there was a decrease in the initiated actions of the teachers, there was an increase in the frequency which teachers had to respond to others, and there was value violation since the older teachers who were accustomed to going to a man because men traditionally took the initiative in the system now had to go to a woman. The new guidance program challenged the autonomous status of the teachers who felt that they could handle the personal problems of the student in the classroom rather than sending the student to another member of the staff for assistance.

To be truly successful the new traits or change should enhance the existing system. They need to develop linkages with other components of the school culture. Clyde Kluckhohn once compared the high school curriculum with an English garden. Like each section of the English garden which was separated from the next with a high hedge, the subjects of the secondary school curriculum were isolated from each other by time and space. They lacked linkages with one another. I would suggest that the reason that so many suggested changes in American education are fads is that the changes lacked linkages within the school and as a consequence are never incorporated into the existing system. I'm certain that those of you who are more familiar with the history of the social studies in American schools, could account for a large number of brief alterations in the social studies programs which, like fads, have disappeared. They never were integrated or adjusted to the other elements of the system.

The results of attempted change can be complete acceptance of the new trait, or adaptation of the new trait so that it is fused into the existing trait complex, or reaction such as the development of a contra-change movement among some or all members of the society. In the instance of the reaction process, this may take place among students or teachers or the clients of the school. In my experience in introducing anthropology in the school curriculum there have been several instances of some clients of the school resisting the teaching of anthropology because it includes the notion of human evolution and/or because of its relativistic approach to other cultures.

Anthropologists recognize two types of culture change, directed and non-directed. In directed culture change an advocate interferes actively and purposely in the target system. Usually the advocate possesses an utopic model for change, wherein the advocate's role is manipulative. The advocate focuses on the act of acceptance. I would suggest that most of change in education uses this utopic model. Non-directed culture change uses a pragmatic model for change where the change agent develops a climate for change. Theoretically the pragmatic model involves a naturalistic mode of change as individuals in the system create a culture which responds to internal and external stress and reduced tension by making adjustments in the companents of the culture.

But if I read Fred Newman's statement at last year's conference correctly, I assume that most of you would use the utopic model of culture change. There are a number of variables which are important to take into consideration when assuming the change advocate role (Gallaher). First, one should give careful consideration to the kinds of authority to which the innovation is tied. Who is proposing the change? A "big name" in social studies education, the state legislature, the superintendent, a "powerful" teacher? In some instances the change advocate may need to invent new authorities if the conventional ones are

inadequate. Within the pragmatic model the teachers would be the authority for the change. How are you as a change agent going to legitimize the change?

Another variable to consider is the expectation for change within the school. Some schools which I would classify as traditional school cultures have developed a rationale which reveres the "old ways." They feel that the best way to survive in a rapidly changing society is to return to the days of the "Little Red Schoolhouse." Teachers in this traditional school culture have developed habits which are difficult to change, i.e., "I have always taught American History this way." The traditional school culture also includes many school traditions which resist change. Among the faculty there is a high level of fear of disruption whenever any change is suggested. On the other hand there are progressive school cultures which actually revere change. They perceive their school as constantly adjusting to cultural changes at the national, state, and local level. The teachers are constantly seeking new ways to improve the school organization and the curriculum. They attend workshops, read the literature in their area of expertise, and travel to conventions to share their experiences with other teachers and experts. Some of these schools may actually become revolutionary in that they perceive the school as a change agent for progress in American society.

Another variable to consider is the margin of security shared by members of the system. For example, the better teachers are usually more ready to accept change than the poorer ones. The time factor is also important. Some changes can be made over a short period of time while others may take several years. For the most part, change in education appears to be incremental rather than rapid. Too often the change agent's patience runs out when a proposed change does not occur quickly enough. The size or scale of change is another important variable. Large scale changes take longer and require intensive communication effort. With respect to communication the change agent should not neglect the informal

communication system. For example, social cliques can be an invaluable channel for communication to ensure that a change will be readily accepted.

Within the past few decades anthropologists have come to realize that the so called isolated tribal culture which they had been studying was in fact being influenced by events as far away as London or Paris. In a similar fashion the school culture is part of a larger system. Innovations in the school culture owe their relevance to a larger system. This is particularly true of the school since it is a service organization and as such administrators and teachers must constantly legitimize the goals of the school to a client group. The normative procedures for arriving at the defined goals of the school usually include representatives of the clients of the school, i.e., parents, school board members, state legislators, and U.S. Congressmen. The school's institutional goals, therefore, should also coincide with the cultural goals of American society. In tribal societies there is considerable agreement on cultural goals. Almost everyone in the tribe agrees as to what constitutes a good tribal member and the methods of educating the youth to produce a tribal adult. In a rapidly-changing, heterogeneous society such as the U.S., there is much confusion of cultural goals. We do not have a consensus as to what constitutes a "good American." This creates problems for the development of a social studies program in the school, since there is little agreement on goals among the professional educators and the clients of the school. Progress, therefore, becomes defined as change in and by itself, and is usually measured as an increase in size, rather than movement toward some well-defined institutional goal.

The service nature of the school organization also presents the dilemma of who can serve as a change agent within the institution. The anthropological studies of school administrators suggest that the principal's role is that of the man/woman in the middle (Spindler, Wolcott 1973). That is, the principal's role

requires the maintenance of an equilibrium between the demands of the school's clients and the wishes of the faculty. As such the school principal cannot play the role of a change agent. Who then, can fulfill the change advocate role within the institution?

If, however, Fred Newman was referring to cultural change as a result of large scale reform in a national social studies movement, then the anthropologist must move from the microscopic level of the school to the microscopic level of the nation state. Similar to sociologists and historians, anthropologists have also been interested in large scale change such as social movements. A decade ago Anthony Wallace developed a culture change model based on Kuhn's THE STRUCTURE OF SCIENTIFIC REVOLUTIONS. In his model Wallace proposed that innovation (of a new paradigm) entails conflict with an older one which it must replace and has symbolic and charismatic qualities often associated with a culture hero. There is continuous core development and elaboration of ideas as individuals make contributions by resolving internal ambiguities and contradictions. Eventually there is recognition of the paradigm at some stage of its development by an economic, military, religious, or political organization other than the paradigmatic community which sees in its application an opportunity for the protection or advancement of its own interests. Community members justify the paradigm on an ethical, religious, philosophical, or political basis, such as "it will lead to a better world."

Hutchens further elaborated the Kuhn-Wallace model in his study of the education of Cuban women. He studied how the mass media was used to focus the attention of the public on the innovation in order to maintain a clear perception of precisely what was to be accomplished by the innovation. He studied how the mass organizations such as teacher's organizations and political units refined and re-enforced the innovation as the program was operationalized. He studied the

manner in which the innovation was administered through legislation. He studied the social dynamics of the innovation over time, to determine how the outcomes of the innovation were affecting its continuance and/or how the innovation was not refined and as a consequence, was subject to failure. He studied the formal curriculum to determine how the innovation was rationalized and systematically oriented toward "correct thinking."

The advantage of the Hutchens model is that it can provide an evaluation process which is continuous rather than after the fact and as such rescue an educational program which may be failing due to a lack of understanding of the culture change processes which are occurring in conjunction with the program. A number of my colleagues are now exploring the application of the Hutchens model to the recent so-called reform movements in U.S. education.

My challenge to you, as leaders in social studies education, is to answer the question: has there been a paradigmatic shift in social studies education similar to the paradigmatic shift in the sciences? For example, the shift from Newtonian physics to quantum physics. If so, can the Hutchens model and the directed-change orientation provided in this paper, be useful in analyzing this paradigmatic shift and in developing a "modus operandi": for initiating change in the school environment?

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